

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Public Hearing On Family-to-Family from Private Agency Perspective

Linda Lipscomb, MSW, CSW, Program Director, Homes for Black Children

Annie E. Casey Foundation has worked with Michigan Department of Human Services (formerly FIA) to reform the foster care system. Homes for Black Children submitted a grant three years ago to provide placement services for those children who required a foster home placement. We were awarded the grant. A family facilitator was hired. Once the funding source was no longer available, the position continued to be maintained at HBC. The facilitator has been instrumental in maintaining a leadership role on the established strategy committees. They are:

- Community presentations and speaking engagements
- Building Community Partners (Dexter/Elmhurst, SW Detroit, SE Village, Macomb Cnty., Western Wayne [pending])
- Self Evaluation
- Team Decision Making
- Recruitment, Retention & Training
- Facilitator Cluster Meeting
- HBC Family-to-Family Meeting
- Southwest Drug Free Coalition
- Southwest Policy Agency Group
- Family-to-Family School Meeting
- Casey Site Meetings
- State Family-to-Family Meetings
- Casey Trainings
- Recruitment Events for F2F (schools, churches, upcoming sites, community, new community partners)
- Support Meeting (via Families On the Move) and all other F2F support groups

Originally, Homes for Black Children's involvement with Family-to-Family was Target Area I Southeastern Village (SEV) only. However, the agency embraced the total concept of Family-to-Family and implemented Family Case Reviews (FCR) for all cases within the agency addressing: Change of Placement, Reunification and Permanency Planning.

Homes for Black Children has developed and designed the following tools to ensure the successful family based care via Family-to-Family outcomes, goals and strategies.

- Maintained a full-time trained Family-to-Family Facilitator
- Conduct Family Case Reviews for all cases, and hold Initial Family Team Meetings
- Adhere to placement of child(ren) within their zip code and/or contiguous area, maintain siblings together, locate and securing appropriate relatives on 95% of new intakes
- Providing Family-to-Family child placement back-up system
- Revised orientation and training curricula addressing Family-to-Family outcomes, goals and strategies
- Trained current and new foster/adoptive parents in Family-to-Family principles

Written Testimony ▪ Private Agency Perspective

- Development and recruitment of licensed foster homes within the target areas:
Area I: 12 Area II: 2 Area III: 36 with 5 pending licensures
- There are currently approximately 70 licensed foster homes, 90% of which are within Wayne County
- Attendance and participation with all Family-to-Family subcommittees including support groups in all areas and service as a liaison for all target areas
- Trained Homes for Black Children entire staff on Family-to-Family protocols, etc.
- Upgraded the agency computer systems
- Established internal monthly Homes for Black Children Family-to-Family meeting to identify strategies to overcome barriers and to provide information on the Wayne County implementation process
- Developed agency pamphlets, invitations, tracking systems, facilitator tools and kit.

Embracing the Annie E. Casey's Family-to-Family Model, our four newly hired Parent Advocates are successfully supporting and assisting birth parents in obtaining needed skills and resources, while increasing their ability to manage their daily living challenges and attain faster reunification.